

Tidbits and Teaching Techniques for Tired Teachers

Peer Coaching¹

Betty Phillips, Universidad del Valle de Mexico-Tlalpan

What is peer coaching? How does it affect your teaching? How will it improve your teaching? These are some of the questions this article will answer.

Have you ever come out of your classroom wondering how you did as a teacher? There are days that you think you're doing a wonderful job and then you see a later student evaluation or coordinator's teaching evaluation and see that it was usually low. Sometimes we dismiss this criticism as "They don't know what they're talking about." But as human beings and teachers we do not want people to criticize us and we do want to be good at our jobs. How can we do this without leaving ourselves open and vulnerable? Who can you ask for help without feeling embarrassed and awkward?

When we have trouble we usually look to a friend...a good friend. A person we can trust. A person who will give us good advice and helpful, constructive criticism. This is what peer coaching is all about. Psychologists suggest that we should have a *stress partner*, a person who will listen to you and respond to your mental needs. This is similar to peer coaching. We all have a colleague who is our particular friend. When you plan to meet with this friend--over coffee in the Teachers' Room or at breakfast or lunch or during a free hour--you both share, tell your special *peer coach* what you plan on doing in class. Give him or her what you want them to look for in your teaching, classroom environment or with your relationship with your students. For example, maybe your students don't seem to understand what you ask them to do during class. You tell them over and over again in English and then you end up having to tell them in Spanish. You want to know what the problem is.

Your peer coach goes into your class and takes notes, only observing what you want comments on. After the class you both get together and discuss the problems and possible solutions. There can even be a later observation to see if you have improved or not. In reality, all segments of a lesson plan and all types of problems can be observed and discussed and you can mutually help each other all year, constantly setting up new goals to be reached.

¹With the collaboration of Gloria Elena Diaz Rodriguez.